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Committees

Some issues the Government has to deal with are more difficult to resolve than others and require more extensive analysis and preparation before a proposal can be drafted and submitted to the Riksdag for a decision. Examples range from major policy decisions affecting the whole of Swedish society over long periods to smaller but technically complex issues.

In dealing with matters of this kind, the Government may choose to appoint a special expert or group, officially known as a commission or committee of inquiry, to take a closer look at the issues involved. Government committees of inquiry examine and report on matters in accordance with a set of instructions, known as terms of reference, laid down by the Government. These identify the area or issue to be investigated, define the problems to be addressed and set a closing date for the inquiry.

Committee terms of reference are available on the Government Offices legal databases, where they are published on a continual basis. These databases also include committee reports containing information about all government committees, including the names of members and experts on committees.

Politicians and specialists in cooperation

Committees normally include experts familiar with the area or matter to be examined and, in some cases, politicians. The committee process is one way of accessing knowledge about a particular issue that is to be found in different areas of society. It offers politicians and specialists an excellent opportunity for fruitful cooperation. Furthermore, the parliamentary opposition and different advocacy groups are given an opportunity to follow reform work from an early stage.

The conclusions of an inquiry are published as reports in the Swedish Government Official Reports Series (please see publication archive). Some 200 inquiries are usually in progress at any given time.

Referral process

After a committee has submitted its report to the Minister responsible, its contents are referred for consideration to relevant authorities, advocacy groups and the public. They are given an opportunity to express their views on the conclusions of an inquiry before the Government formulates a legislative proposal. The Government wants to hear the opinion of those likely to be affected by future legislation to find out whether there is support for its proposal. If a large proportion of the bodies to which the matter has been referred are negative, the Government may decide not to pursue the matter further, or try to find other solutions than those proposed by the committee.

Referrals must be in writing and the referral bodies must be given at least three months in which to submit their opinions. Only in exceptional cases can other forms be used, for example referral meetings.

How to find ongoing and completed committees

Information about both ongoing/current and completed committees or inquiries is available at the Swedish Government Official Reports Series website (in Swedish only). If you have any questions, please contact the department "Kommittéservice" at the Government Offices, through the switchboard.

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